

Subject: Concerns Regarding NIL Litigation, Case No 4:20-cv-03919

Dear Honorable Claudia Wilken,

I am writing to respectfully bring to your attention the unintended consequences that current Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) legislation and roster limit policies are having on non-scholarship student-athletes, particularly walk-ons. These young men and women dedicate themselves to their sports and studies without the financial support that scholarship athletes receive, and yet they are being disproportionately affected by roster restrictions that limit their opportunities and jeopardize their well-being.

In many cases, including that of my son Brock, these limitations are more than just numbers on paper—they are life-altering decisions. Brock graduated high school and left the very next day to begin his journey as a preferred walk-on at a Division I university. He gave his full commitment to the football program, participating in summer, fall, and spring workouts, practices, and games while taking on a rigorous academic load—earning 37 credit hours in two semesters and maintaining a perfect 4.0 GPA. Despite his unwavering dedication, Brock was cut from the team when a new coaching staff took over, due in large part to roster limitations and shifting program priorities. The impact was devastating. He was forced to enter the transfer portal, leave behind his degree program, teammates, and close friendships, and start over at a new institution. Though he has since enrolled at another university, where he continues as a preferred walk-on and has earned 39 credit hours with a 3.7 GPA, the stress of the transition led to him developing Alopecia, an autoimmune condition often triggered by extreme stress.

Brock's story is not unique. Thousands of walk-on athletes are facing the same uphill battle, with dreams being crushed not by lack of talent or effort, but by administrative constraints. These players are often essential to their teams, providing depth, energy, and future scholarship potential. Unlike professional leagues such as the NFL, college programs cannot simply pull players from a practice squad when injuries or eligibility issues arise. Roster limits only increase the strain on teams and compromise preparation and competitiveness. Furthermore, these constraints force student-athletes to transfer—losing credits, time, and momentum in their education. The psychological toll this takes cannot be overstated. For student-athletes who have done everything right—worked hard, maintained stellar academics, and honored their commitments—being cut due to roster limits is devastating. It undermines their mental health, their faith in the system, and the values that college athletics claim to promote.

I urge you to consider the full human impact of these policies as they continue to be debated and legislated. While NIL rights are a step forward in empowering student-athletes, the accompanying roster limits disproportionately punish those who receive no financial benefit from the system. We must find a balance that honors fairness, protects student-athletes' well-being, and maintains the integrity of college athletics.

Specifically, I ask that you consider the possibility of **grandfathering in players from last year's rosters**, so that these young athletes—who committed their time, effort, and lives to their programs—are not unfairly displaced due to sudden changes beyond their control. Additionally, there must be **guardrails in place to prevent universities from exploiting performance-based loopholes** as a way to cut walk-ons or non-scholarship athletes to remain within roster limits. Unfortunately, as with many things in life, I can see this becoming a common occurrence—where subjective performance assessments are used to remove players who have done nothing wrong, simply because they are not financially tied to the program.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of this matter. I am hopeful that with the right attention and leadership, we can create a more just and supportive environment for all collegiate athletes.

Sincerely,

Reigan O'Quinn M.Ed., LPC